gradation in such rural areas are being supported through GOI-UNDP Endogenous Tourism Project and Capacity Building for Service Providers scheme of the Ministry. The promotion of rural tourism can lead to increased tourists arrivals to rural sites and in the process can strengthen rural livelihood including benefits to the youths, through income from visitor handling services apart from income through art and craft activities. The list of such projects taken up during 10th five year plan is annexed as Statement. [Refer to the statement appended to the answer to unstarred Question 685(a)]

Improvement of **Tourism Infrastructure**

692. DR. M.A.M. RAMASWAMY: Will the Minister of TOURISM be pleased to state:

(a) whether Government have approved removing ceilings on project cost for tourism infrastructure development in order to improve tourism infrastructure;

(b) if so, the details thereof; and

(c) the details of identified circuits and destinations for which this ceiling has been removed?

THE MINISTER OF TOURISM (SHRIMATI AMBIKA SONI): (a) to (c) The guidelines of the scheme for Central financial assistance to States/ UTs for Product/Infrastructure Development for Destinations and Circuits have been revised. The existing upper limit of Rs. 8.00 crore has been enhanced to Rs. 50 crore for development of identified major tourist circuits and that of Rs. 5.00 crore has been enhanced to Rs. 25.00 crore for development of identified major tourist destinations to ensure the overaH development of tourism infrastructure to world standard in consultation with the concerned State/UT Government. This revision is only for major circuits and destinations while the other circuits and destinations are still eligible for assistance limited to Rs. 8 crore and Rs. 5 crore respectively.

Promotion of Tourism in Sikkim

693. SHRI O.T. LEPCHA: Will the Minister of TOURISM be pleased to state:

(a) whether Government are contemplating to formulate any special scheme to promote tourism in the country particularly in Sikkim;